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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Twenty-sixth session
14 January-1 February 2002
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*
Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Report provided by the specialized agencies of the United Nations on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

1. On behalf of the Committee, the Secretariat invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), on 30 October 2001, to submit to the Committee a report on information provided by States to FAO on the implementation of article 11 and related articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would supplement the information contained in the reports of the States parties to the Convention that will be considered at the twenty-sixth session.

2. Other information sought by the Committee refers to activities, programmes and policy decisions undertaken by FAO to promote the implementation of article 11 and related articles of the Convention.

3. The report annexed hereto has been submitted in compliance with the Committee's request.

* CEDAW/C/2002/I/1.

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Annex

Report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Fiji

1. According to FAO statistics, the population of the Fiji Islands for 2000 is estimated at 814,000, of which 50.5 per cent live in rural areas. The population comprises distinct ethnic groups. There are ethnic differences in labour force participation, sector-specific occupational choice and family formation patterns. The majority of the rural population is of Fijian origin.

2. Agriculture is the mainstay and the largest sector of Fiji's economy, accounting for almost 43 per cent of foreign exchange earnings. In 2000, it provided nearly 50 per cent of total employment and contributed 19 per cent of Fiji's gross domestic product (GDP). While the sector showed continued growth over the years, its contribution to the economy has fallen since 1994 by 21 per cent of GDP.

3. The forestry sector continued to constitute overall 2.5 per cent of GDP and 10 per cent of export earnings. It is the fifth most important export commodity. The focus in the Fiji forestry plan was on hardwood and pine planting. Fiji currently has 44,760 hectares of hardwood forests and 40,730 hectares of pine forest.

4. Fisheries are now the fourth most important export industry, largely due to the export of large tuna to Japan and other markets. Fisheries offer considerable potential for expansion. About 90 per cent of Fiji's villages are located on the coastal area and a large proportion of the Fijian rural population still relies on subsistence fishing for their protein needs.

5. Beef, dairy and piggery production has declined over the last few years.

6. While the percentage of active people working in agriculture declined from 42 per cent in 1995 to 39 per cent in 2000, the estimated proportion of women participating in agriculture increased from 16.5 per cent in 1995 to 19.3 per cent according to FAO statistics. The proportion of men working in agriculture was 83.4 per cent in 1995 and dropped to 80.6 per cent in 2000.

7. The issue of ownership of land has been an ongoing sensitive issue and led to the forceful takeover of the elected Government in May 2000. Native land comprises 82.9 per cent of the total land in Fiji and consequently cannot be sold or otherwise alienated from its current ownership. However, it can be leased through the Native Land Trust Board. The terms of these leases are usually very long, from 30 to 99 years. The purpose of the lease is specified and is subject to the approval of the Board. A large number of sugar land leases are expiring during the period 2000-2002. Recent changes in government and disagreements on the respective rights of owners and tenants have made it difficult to reach mutual agreement on the renewal of these leases.

8. Household production remains important for many rural households; the majority of the population relies on some form of cash income to sustain their living standards. Around a quarter of the workforce is in wage and salary employment, while the remainder earns income from informal employment and the sale of primary products. However, following the events of May 2000, an estimated 6,000 to 8,000 persons lost their jobs. Many businesses, especially hotels and retailers, cut working hours by as much as half while keeping employees technically "employed". The extent of the actual level of lost income was far greater than that measured by official work and income loss figures.

9. Women in Fiji are increasingly self-employed in income-generating activities such as farming, market-gardening, fishing and reef-gleaning, craft production, retail outlets and food vending. Policies are intended to involve women as partners in development, to train women to improve their employment opportunities, to strengthen information on gender and coordination of activities and to examine legislation with respect to gender. Gender sensitization training has been carried out and gender is now incorporated into mainstream policies and activities.

10. The FAO technical programme has provided essential assistance to Fiji in the areas of agriculture statistics, control of the African Tulip, urgent provision

of basic agricultural inputs to drought-affected farmers, strengthening of national capacity for emergency disaster preparedness and mitigation, and survey of honeybee pests and diseases. Fiji also received assistance in the form of four TeleFood projects. TeleFood is the annual FAO campaign of broadcasts, concerts and other events to reach out and raise awareness about world hunger and to mobilize resources for hundreds of hunger-fighting projects. One of the approved TeleFood projects is the project titled "Vuo Village Women's Project: Small-scale Piggery Farm", approved under funds collected in the 1997 TeleFood campaign and completed in December 2000.

FAO assistance

11. Small-scale commercial fisheries supply most of the fish consumed within Fiji. Government policy is to encourage these fisheries to become more efficient and to improve the quality of fish available to consumers. With this in view, FAO initiated the technical assistance project entitled "Enhancement of Customary Marine Fishery Tenure", the objective of which is to enhance the role of the traditional qoliqoli system in order to strengthen inshore fisheries management. The reinforcement of this traditional system of fisheries management will directly increase people's participation in the fisheries sector, strengthen their capacity to manage fisheries and enhance food security. Furthermore, it will improve the social and economic position of disadvantaged groups, most notably, women in fishing communities. This objective will be accomplished through the development of a methodology based on traditional practice, guidelines to train village communities and training of the persons who will be involved in downstream community-based management training.

Trinidad and Tobago

Agriculture

12. According to FAO statistics, the estimated population of Trinidad and Tobago for 2000 was 1.289 million, of which 26 per cent was living in rural areas. Only 8.7 per cent of the economically active population worked in agriculture.

13. The total proportion of female participation in the labour force in 2000 was 37.3 per cent, but only 3.7 per cent of them were working in agriculture. The proportion of economically active men was 62.7 per cent, of which 11.6 per cent worked in agriculture. Of the total number of people working in agriculture, 16 per cent were women.

14. After experiencing two successive years of decline, the outputs of the agricultural sector increased by 12.6 per cent in 1999. The sector's contribution to total gross domestic product (GDP) increased to 2.9 per cent (from 2.4 per cent in 1998).

Women in agriculture

15. Women perform important agricultural tasks, such as planting, cutting, weeding, fertilizing and harvesting.

16. An FAO study of 1995 on "Improving the relevance and effectiveness of agricultural extension activities for women farmers" in the early 1990s showed that 26.25 per cent of heads of household in Trinidad and Tobago were women and 61.25 per cent were men. Furthermore, only 13.75 per cent of women farmers participated in women farmers' associations and 40 per cent of the women were assisted in doing the farm work by their husbands. Women have a significant influence on the selection of crops to be kept for family use and storage. Decision-making on cultivation, selling and marketing of minor crops is the responsibility of both husband and wife, and 80 per cent of women farmers in Trinidad and Tobago make major decisions on the management of family income.